

Spring 2012

Karaoke

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Recommended Citation

Kreitler, Brendan (2012) "Karaoke," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 76 , Article 30.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss76/30>

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KARAOKE

A lectern was placed in the woods.
In time the woods became known
as those woods with the lectern in it.
Standing there all was situated before you,
though nothing required that you stand there.
Rumor lorded over the precincts of dull impulse.
Men came in the sun-dappled hour after work
and tried what they had practiced
and sometimes an unstressed syllable unmoored
in the oratory would recall the speaker's body
and something became further in the thinning light
or disappointed for being at hand, like a heaviness took to dust.
No amount of heaved stone or exquisite sadness
was ever adequate to that, though birds pluck at the scrub.
Wind took up in clumps of long grass and broke
toward the frontage road. Nor was sun benign.
Deluge came and went. The wood finish weathered
in the regular way, until when one looked at it
one saw no lectern. That is a dead tree or the stump
of one, they would think, no different from the surroundings
except for that it seems to want to address them.
Those were the days when it felt good to wear a clean shirt
and set out as though a stranger
into a clearing fell by hand—willed and of will.